

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 ACDA-10 ARA-10 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 DHA-02 EB-07

COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /123 W

-----311747Z 007979 /46

R 311711Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4537

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 09009

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E. O. 11652:NA

TAGS: PINT, XF

SUBJECT: SUNDAY TIMES ARTICLE ON SECRET PLANS TO

INVADE ANGOLA

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1. FOLLOWING ARE EXTRACTS FROM A LENGTHY, FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN THE MAY 29 EDITION OF THE SUNDAY TIMES. ITS HEADLINE READS, "SOUTH AFRICA BACKS SECRET PLAN TO INVADE ANGOLA."

2. "AS PRESIDENT AGOSTINHO NETO OF ANGOLA BASKS THIS WEEKEND IN HIS SUCCESS AT CRUSHING FRIDAY'S MINOR COUP

ATTEMPT, A SECRET AND MUCH MORE POWERFUL FORCE IS BEING GATHERED TO MOUNT A FOUR-PRONGED INVASION OF HIS COUNTRY.

THE SUNDAY TIMES CAN EXCLUSIVELY REVEAL DETAILS OF THE PLAN, CODE NAMED 'COBRA 77.' THE TROOPS INVOLVED ARE AFRICAN--FROM THE PRO-WESTERN UNION FOR THE TOTAL INDEPENDENCE OF ANGOLA (UNITA) AND THE FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF CABINDA (FLEC), ANGOLA'S OIL-RICH NORTHERN ENCLAVE. BUT THE OPERATION IS SUPPORTED BY SOUTH AFRICA, NAMIBIA, ZAIRE AND A NUMBER OF WESTERN NATIONS INCLUDING FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY. THE FIRST STAGE OF COBRA 77 IS ALREADY UNDER WAY. IT INVOLVES THE DEFECTION OF DISSIDENT MEMBERS OF THE SOVIET-BACKED RULING MARXIST PARTY, THE MPLA, WHICH GAINED CONTROL OF ANGOLA WITH THE HELP OF CUBAN TROOPS WHEN THE PORTUGUESE ABANDONED THEIR COLONY. NETO HIMSELF, IN A RADIO BROADCAST MONITORED IN THE WEST, REVEALED LAST WEEKEND THAT SOME MPLA TROOPS HAD ABSCONDED, TAKING WITH THEM LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT.

UNITA OFFICIALS SAY THE ARRANGEMENT WITH MPLA REBELS WAS THAT THEY SHOULD "CAPTURE" WEAPONS FROM THE ANGOLAN ARMY WHEN THEY DEFECTED. THEY SAY ONE OF THE DISSIDENTS IS A SENIOR MPLA OFFICIAL, AND THEY CLAIM THE 'LIBERATED' SOVIET-MADE EQUIPMENT INCLUDES KALASHNIKOV AUTOMATIC RIFLES, BAZOOKAS, MISSILES AND VEHICLES.

THE PLAN FOR THE INVASION ITSELF WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE LATER THIS YEAR, IS BASED ON ATTACKS UNCLASSIFIED

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FROM NAMIBIA AND ZAIRE AS WELL AS A SEABORNE OPERATION WITH SHIPS SUPPLIED BY WHAT UNITA DESCRIBES AS A NUMBER OF FRIENDLY AFRICAN NATIONS.' THE FOURTH PRONG OF COBRA WILL COME FROM CABINDA, WHERE FLEC--WHICH IS BACKED BY FRANCE AND ZAIRE--ANNOUNCED LAST WEEK WHAT ITS FORCES HAD STARTED 'EXECUTING' CUBAN AND ANGOLAN TROOPS

UNITA LEADERS, WHO HAVE UNOFFICIAL PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES IN SEVERAL WESTERN CAPITALS, SAY THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IS 'LOOKING THE OTHER WAY' IN ALLOWING NAMIBIA TO BE USED AS A TRAINING AREA FOR THE INVASION FORCE, BUT NO DIRECT SOUTH AFRICAN PARTICIPATION IN COBRA 77 WILL BE ACCEPTED' 'IN ORDER NOT TO GIVE THE OPERATION A WRONG START IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD AND THE UNITED STATES.' TRAINING CAMPS ARE SAID TO BE LOCATED AT KUNDU, GROOTFONTEIN, ONDANGWA AND CHANGWENA, IN NORTHERN NAMIBIA THE COBRA 77 SAY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS REFUSED TO HELP IN ANY WAY, EVEN REJECTING AN APPEAL FOR MEDIC-

AL SUPPLIES. WEST GERMANY'S CONTRIBUTION IS SAID TO
BE 'LARGELY HUMANITARIAN,' BUT UNITA SAYS THAT WEAPONS
FOR ITS ARMY ARE BEING SENT 'UNOFFICIALLY' VIA THIRD
COUNTRIES FROM WEST GERMAN SOURCES.
ONE OF THE CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH FINANCIAL SUPPORT
FROM THE WEST IS FLOWING INTO COBRA 77 IS THROUGH FUNDS
SET UP TO ASSIST ANGOLANS WHO FLED NAMIBIA, WITH PAY-
MENTS PASSING THROUGH THESE REFUGEE FUND ACCOUNTS IN

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A MONTE CARLO BANK. MUCH OF THE LONG-RANGE PLANNING OF THE INVASION IS BEING DONE FROM THE FORMER FRENCH COLONY OF SENEGAL, WHERE THE PRO-FRENCH PRESIDENT, LEOPOLD SENGHOR, HAS REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE THE NETO
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REGIME IN ANGOLA.
T/H COBRA PROJECT, FOLLOWING FRANCE'S SUCCESSFUL AIRLIFT TO HELP PRESIDENT MOBUTU OF ZAIRE TO REPEL THE ANGOLAN INVASION OF SHABA PROVINCE LAST MONTH, IS SEEN AS A CLEAR INDICATION THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING IS DETERMINED TO STRENGTHEN FRANCE'S STRATEGIC POSITION IN AFRICA. HE HAS BEEN UNDER PRESSURE FOR SOME TIME FROM RIGHT WING GAULLISTS TO SET UP A STANDING FORCE IN BLACK AFRICA, AND THE SUBJECT WAS ON THE AGENDA DURING HIS VISIT TO SENEGAL LAST MONTH. FRANCE HAS OIL INTERESTS IN CABINDA AND SUPPORTS THE FLEC MOVEMENT, WHICH LAST WEEK THREATENED TO BLOW UP THE AMERICAN GULF OIL COMPANY'S LAND-BASED AND OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS UNLESS THE FIRM STOPS PAYING ROYALTIES TO THE NETO REGIME. FLEC HAS APPARENTLY PROMISED THE FRENCH ELF-EVAP STATE-OWNED CONCERN THAT IT WILL 'INHERIT' PART OF GULF'S CONCESSIONS IN CABINDA IF THE AMERICANS LEAVE.
FLEC'S FRENCH CONNECTION IS A FORMER FRENCH ARMY NCO AND CONGO ARMY INSTRUCTOR. MAJOR JEAN DA COSTA. HE IS NOT ONLY CHIEF OF STAFF OF FLEC'S 2,000 STRONG GUERRILLA ARMY BUT ALSO A MEMBER OF THE FRENCH INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, SDECE. LAST YEAR, AT THE START OF THE CABINDA OPERATION, DA COSTA ANNOUNCED DURING A VISIT TO PARIS THAT HE HAD COME TO SEE 'SEVERAL HIGH FRENCH OFFICIALS, AS WE ARE RELYING ON FRANCE TO HELP US IN CONQUERING AND MAINTAINING THE INDEPENDENCE OF CABINDA.'
A FEW DAYS LATER DA COSTA WAS JOINED IN PARIS BY TWO OTHER CABINDAN LEADERS. CHARLES PENA AND FRANCOIS-XAVIER LUBOTA, AND FLEC SET UP TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS IN A PARIS HOTEL. ITS AFRICAN HQ IS IN A RESIDENTIAL SUBURB OF THE ZAIRE CAPITAL, KINSHASA."

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